

Legislative Update March 19, 2020

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Legislature adjourned on Tuesday, March 17th, completing immediate business including ways to address this current crisis. Below is an update on actions to date, in anticipation of a special session at a later date to pick up unfinished business.

- **Transportation and Infrastructure bond:** [LD 2134](#) was passed with the necessary $\frac{2}{3}$ majority in the House and Senate. This proposal for investments in transportation and broadband infrastructure will appear on the ballot for a public vote on June 9th. GrowSmart Maine, in our role with the [Maine Broadband Coalition](#) will inform Mainers of the value of these investments. In stating our support for this important piece of legislation, we wish to emphasize that in our view, the two components of the bond proposal, a total of \$105 million to MaineDOT for transportation infrastructure and \$15 million to the ConnectMaine Authority for high-speed internet infrastructure for underserved parts of the state, are inextricably linked and are properly placed within the same bond legislation. The concept of “connectivity”, so often cited in the need for adequate statewide internet service, applies equally to the need for improved transportation infrastructure which serves and connects all aspects of Maine's economy.
- **Maine Historic Rehab Tax Credit:** A subcommittee of the Maine Alliance for Smart Growth steering committee has been working over the past few months with MEREDA to extend the sunset provision of Maine’s historic rehabilitation tax credit, currently set to expire in 2023. Through much discussion with numerous legislators and the administration, there is a path forward. [LD 2047](#) is the Maine Revenue Services bill that will provide incremental extensions of the HRTC, securing it until 2025. This bill passed in the House and Senate. In the coming months, Maine’s Department of Economic and Community Development will be evaluating certain business tax credits, including this one, with a report due at the end of this year. The sunset extension provided for in LD 2047 is meant to secure the tax credit in the short term while this review is underway. GrowSmart Maine, CEI, Maine Preservation, and Greater Portland Landmarks will continue working with MEREDA to support this tax credit through this legislative session and into the next.
- [LD 1956](#) *Resolve to Establish Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities by Reviewing Zoning and Land Use Ordinances*, was voted

out of committee with unanimous acceptance of an amended bill. It has not yet gone before the House and Senate. This commission will be comprised of private sector, agency, and nonprofit representation and it will be charged with reviewing data on housing shortages in the State for low-income and middle-income households, state laws that affect the local regulation of housing and efforts in other states and municipalities to address housing shortages, and to consider measures that would encourage increased housing options in the State. The commission must, no later than November 4, 2020, submit a report, including suggested legislation, for presentation to the Labor and Housing Committee during the First Regular Session of the 130th Legislature in 2021.

- [LD 1981](#) removes barriers to moving tiny houses over public roads. The committee amendment, which was passed unanimously out of the Transportation Committee and has passed in the House and Senate, outlines these changes related to transit of Tiny Houses:
 1. It defines "tiny home."
 2. It amends the use of temporary registration permit provisions to allow transportation of a vehicle after sale, transportation necessary for service or repairs of a vehicle, occasional seasonal relocation of a vehicle or transportation necessary for the relocation of a tiny home.
 3. It provides that a temporary registration permit may not be issued for a vehicle that is otherwise subject to registration.
 4. It establishes a \$100 fee for the certificate of title of a tiny home or manufactured housing.
 5. It provides a process to apply for, issue and cancel certificates of title for tiny homes
 6. It requires that tiny homes be equipped with safe tires and meet the equipment requirements applicable to trailers.
 7. It adds an emergency preamble and clause so the changes can take effect as soon as the bill is enacted and signed by the Governor.
- Other testimony: GrowSmart Maine offered testimony in support of increased funding for Transportation and for reinstating the position of Director for the Municipal Planning Assistance Program. Both of these proposals came out of their legislative policy committees with divided reports and the planning position did not make it into the final budget document, though the transportation investments did.
- Outside the Legislature: GSM signed onto a letter to Congress, and shared this with members of the [Economic Development Council of Maine](#) and MASG members/steering committee. Here is the letter: [T4A Letter](#)